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Full Length Research Paper

Challenges of Domestic Tourism Development in Ethiopia:

Stakeholders' Perspective

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Abstract

This study explores the challenges of domestic tourism development in Ethiopia from the standpoint of key stakeholders. A mixed-method design was used in the study. Quantitative data were gathered from 159 key tourism stakeholders, including government agencies, hotel and tourism service providers, industry associations, academics, and experts. Qualitative data were gathered from ten purposely selected key informants, including two from each of the following groups: government officials, high-level experts, academics, tour operators, and national guides. Descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis were used to analyze quantitative data, while descriptive content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The findings show that citizens' limited tour and travel culture, government strategic directions and priority issues, as well as capacity issues such as research gaps and a lack of proper institutional structure, are major challenges to the development of domestic tourism in Ethiopia. It is recommended that stakeholders strengthen their coordinated and collaborative efforts in developing sector-specific strategies, tactics, legislation, regulations, legal frameworks, and institutional structures.

Keywords:

Domestic Tourism, Challenges, Stakeholders and Ethiopia

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1. Introduction

Tourism is viewed as a potential economic development corridor, with the potential to provide a variety of opportunities such as job creation, foreign exchange earnings, and economic diversification (Tadesse & Getaneh 2018; Robinson & Jonker 2016; UNWTO 2010; Mazimhaka 2006). Tourism is viewed as a successful means of transferring wealth and investment from wealthier to poorer areas both globally and domestically (Sharpley and Telfer 2006). Hence, many countries around the world are working hard to improve the sector's development.

Domestic tourism, as stated in various documents, is the first long-standing form of tourism in human history (Pierret 2011). Aside from its long history and practice, it is also strongly linked to economic, socio-cultural, political, and environmental issues (Ephrem 2012). Domestic tourism is the backbone of the tourism industry in general, as it helps to mitigate the risks associated with international tourism. Manono and Rotich (2013), for example, argue that international tourists may not always support the tourism industry, particularly during times of economic, political, and social upheaval. Within this framework, it is primarily responsible for redistributing national income in developing countries from the rich to the poor (Neto 2003). Simultaneously, domestic tourism has differentiated itself in order to foster people's national pride,

close the seasonality and sensitivity gap, and increase employment and investment opportunities in various parts of the world (Morupisi & Mokgalo 2017; Ephrem 2012 and Mazimhaka 2007). As a result, several governments have begun to recognize the importance of domestic tourism in fostering brotherhood and strengthening national identity (Yechale 2013; Ephrem 2012).

Domestic tourism, despite its enormous potential and undeniable importance, has been largely ignored and is an under-explored segment of tourism, particularly in developing countries (UN-WTO Commission for East Asia and Pacific 2012; Ephrem 2012). To a large extent, criticism has centered on tourism research's proclivity for international tourism development and marketing (Ephrem 2012; Cortes-Jimenez 2008). Domestic tourism, in particular, is an unobserved theme, principally in Africa, because tourism planning and promotion in this continent is oriented toward international tourism, and tourism stakeholders' primary concern is still developing and promoting international tourism rather than domestic tourism (Morupisi & Mokgalo 2017; Euromonitor International 2017; Ephrem 2012). One of the most frequently cited factors associated with Africa's poor performance in domestic tourism development is absence of policies and strategies aimed at the sector (Meron 2018; Morupisi & Mokgalo 2017; Batinoluho 2017 and Ephrem 2012). As Berhanu and Singh (2020) and Yechale (2019) additionally mentioned in this regard, the growth of domestic tourism in Africa is still challenged by lack of strategic documents including non – existence of development and marketing policies and strategies specific to domestic tourism.

Domestic tourism in Ethiopia, like in many other countries in Africa and around the world, has received insufficient attention until recently (Berhanu and Singh 2020; Yechale 2019; Ayalew 2010; Ephrem 2012). Ethiopia, with its rich history, diverse natural and cultural resources, has the huge potential to attract a significant number of domestic tourists. Despite the fact that Ethiopia has ample potential to develop the sector and maximize its development, the current level of domestic tourism development is extremely problematic in reality. As a result, it is critical to conduct a timely study of the country's current challenges and issues in domestic tourism development. Indeed, there have been few inquiries that focused on specific Ethiopian destinations and dealt with fragmented and mixed issues of research topics such as domestic tourism's role as a vehicle for tolerance and peace building (Yechale 2013); enhancing domestic tourism development prospects (Ephrem 2012); challenges and prospects of religious tourism development (Gedecho 2014); practices and stumbling blocks of know your country clubs for domestic tourism development (Meron 2018). The current body of knowledge on challenges of domestic tourism development in Ethiopia specifically from stakeholders' perspective is limited and lacks comprehensive analysis. This gap in the literature undermines our understanding of the complexities and clear pictures domestic tourism sector in Ethiopia and hinders the stakeholders' ability to devise effective strategies for its growth and development. Hence, the purpose of this study is to bridge this less stock of knowledge on challenges of domestic tourism development in Ethiopia based on stakeholders' perspective.

The study makes two contributions. First, it will aid in the promotion of domestic tourism by accurately identifying current challenges and problems impeding Ethiopia's domestic tourism development. As a result, it is useful in developing appropriate policies and strategies. Second, it encourages other researchers to conduct additional research in the field.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample was drawn from key stakeholders such as governmental bodies, tourism and hospitality service providers (both private and public), industry owners' and professionals' associations, academicians, and experts. Officers, experts / professionals, academics, tour guides, tour operators based on purposive and convenient sampling techniques. These stakeholders were chosen because of their direct and indirect roles, as well as their strong ties to the development of local tourism. In addition to this, their availability and readiness to be part of the study were the other reasons to select them.

Table 1: The Sampling Frames of the Research

S. N	Name of Selected Stakeholders	Number of selected respondents	Remarks
1	Ministry of Tourism	10	4 officials and 6 experts
2	Ministry of Education	3	1 official and 2 experts
3	Tourism Training Institute	5	2 officials and 3 senior instructors
4	Ethiopian Airline	3	1 official and 2 experts
5	Ethiopian Tour Operators Association	2	1 official and 1 expert
6	Ethiopian Hotel Owners Association	2	1 official and 1 expert
7	Ethiopian Hotel Professionals Association	2	1 official and 1 expert
8	Regional Bureaus of Culture and Tourism (9 Regions and 2 City Administrations)	55	22 officials and 33 experts
9	Entoto Tourism Destination Development Project Office	5	2 officials and 3 experts
10	Ethiopian Tour Guides Association	3	1 leader and 2 members
11	Conveniently selected Tour and Travel Companies	15	5 officials 10 senior tour operators
12	Conveniently selected Tour Guides	17	17 tour guides
13	National Museum	5	1 official, 2 experts and 2 guides
14	Ethnographic Museum	5	1 official, 2 experts and 2 guides
15	Addis Ababa Museum	5	1 official, 2 experts and 2 guides
16	Conveniently selected tourism and hospitality academicians	45	45 tourism and hospitality academicians
17 Total	Purposively selected tourism professionals/experts	3	3 tourism professionals/ experts 185

2.2. Data Types and Collection Instruments

This study made use of both primary and secondary data. A questionnaire and key informant interviews were used to collect primary data from selected stakeholders. The questionnaire was created using a five-point likert scale, with respondents asked to rate their level of agreement on a scale of 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. The instruments were developed by first sourcing relevant

scales from previous literatures (Meron 2018; Batinoluho 2017; Morupisi and Mokgalo 2017; Manono and Rotich 2013; Yechale 2013; Ephrem 2012 and Mazimhaka 2007), then refining them to the study area by circulating them among senior experts and academicians, increasing the content validity of data collection tools, and finally conducting some sort of pretest on these instruments. The initial questionnaire and its measures were evaluated by two senior experts with extensive knowledge of questionnaire construction and tourism management research. Their suggestions resulted in the exclusion and merging of several items deemed irrelevant and redundant in measuring Ethiopia's domestic tourism development challenges. Following that, the revised questionnaire was tested with 15 respondents to ensure that the items were clear and interpreted as proposed. The final draft was then preceded by some amendments and clarifications.

The questionnaire survey was translated into the national language in order to obtain accurate and necessary information (Amharic). Each respondent was carefully supervised by the researchers and assistant data collectors in clarifying the questions in order to obtain appropriate responses from them.

In addition to the questionnaire surveys, indepth interviews with ten key informants chosen from various authorities were conducted. Interviews were conducted to gather the perspectives, perceptions, and experiences of key stakeholders with knowledge of Ethiopian domestic tourism activities.

2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis were used to analyze quantitative data (EFA). As we expected a high inter-correlation between factors, the items were entered into an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring with direct oblimin. The quantitative data analysis results were then supplemented with qualitative data that was analyzed using descriptive content analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. General Profile of Respondents

The majority of respondents (74.2%) were males, and 62.3% were between the ages of 28 and 37. In terms of education, the vast majority (91.1%) were holders of bachelor degree and above. In terms of occupation, the sample included experts and personnel (41.5%), academics (26.4%), tour operators (23.3%), and tourism leaders (8.8%). On the other hand, the majority of respondents (69.2%) have more than five years of industry experience. This generally indicates that the sample included respondents with a higher level of education and more industry experience.

3.2. Challenges of Domestic Tourism Development in Ethiopia

Domestic tourism development challenges were assessed using 15 items drawn from previous studies, eight of which were eliminated using Exploratory Factor Analysis. The EFA of the remaining seven items yielded three factor solutions, as shown in table 2 namely, limited tour and travel culture and low influence of media (Factor 1), government strategic direction and priority issues (Factor 2), and capacity related constraints (Factor 3) as existing challenges of domestic tourism development in Ethiopia.

Table 2: Results of analysis of challenges of domestic tourism development in Ethiopia

Factors	Items	Factor	Mean	SD	Cronbach
		Loading			Alpha (α)
F1- Limited tour	Low influence of media	0.953	4.19	0.764	
culture and low in-	Limited tour and travel culture	0.458	4.26	0.823	0. 68
fluence of media	of Ethiopians				
	Grand	0.706	4.225	0.794	
F2 - Government	Absence of national domestic	0.895	4.02	0.958	
strategic directions	tourism development strategy				0.63
and priority	Giving priority to international	0.477	4.12	0.806	_
issues	tourism in expense of domestic				
	tourism				
		0.686	4.07	0.882	-
	Grand				
F3 - Capacity related	Research gaps on domestic	0.602	4.22	0.919	
constraints	tourism				
	Inconvenient institutional	0.565	4.09	0.825	0.59
	structure				
	Lack of skilled man power	0.558	3.53	1.195	-
Grand		0.575	3.95	0.979	-

The results reveal that limited tour and travel culture and low influence of media (Factor 1) with a grand mean and standard deviation of (mean = 4.225, SD = 0.794), government strategic directions and priority issues (Factor 2) with a grand mean and standard deviation of (mean = 4.07, SD = 0.882), and capacity related constraints (Factor 3) with a grand mean and standard deviation of (mean

= 3.95, SD = 0.979) are the most significant challenges to domestic tourism development in Ethiopia.

Domestic tourism development is dependent on citizens' proclivity to tour and travel (Morupisi & Mokgalo, 2017). However, the study results suggest that the situation in terms of domestic tourism is rather bleak in Ethiopia. Campaigns to raise awareness are critical to the development of domestic tourism. So far, certain informal clubs and associations have been established under the name "know your country clubs." However, due to a lack of proper support and guidance, these clubs have not achieved the required results. K4 and K6, for example, have explained Ethiopians tour and travel culture and perceptions as follows.

"Surprisingly, the majority of Ethiopians do not consider domestic tourism to be a source of entertainment. For some, tourism consists solely of trips to Dubai, Bangkok, or other destinations" (K4)

"...the problems are not limited to participation; even those involved in domestic tourism activities have also chronic problems of understanding the nature of tourism due to limited touring culture and experience. According to their perception, a tourist attraction means simply a site that has an exceptional gigantic building, or if not, a huge heritage. Others are not considered as attractions. They have basic problems in appreciating attractions especially nature based tourism resources. Most of the time, they have problems of interconnecting the national relics with only to churches, monasteries and mosques as well as to other religious sites. Even they want to take a short period of time and mostly pre-travel arrangement phase is non — existent. Hence, they don't come to stay long with proper arrangements they mostly want to return after staying 1 or 2 days only. I think this is the other challenge." (k6)

One reason given for poor citizens' tour and travel culture is poverty and a low level of disposable income, which is linked to wealth distribution and income disparities. They emphasized that there is a large disparity in wealth distribution in Ethiopia, which can be listed and grouped under the challenges of developing this sector in Ethiopia. Developing both urban and rural areas will help to raise citizens' living standards, thereby increasing citizens' ability to participate in tour and travel activities. In relation to this, one key informant (K3) has emphasized the following:

"Another impediment, in my opinion, is the country's unequal wealth distribution. Addis Ababa has accumulated (discovered) more than half of the country's wealth. It is also impossible to force domestic tourists to come from Addis Ababa. The other areas should be economically developed.

Another challenge which was mentioned by key informants as the current challenge for domestic tourism development in Ethiopia is safety and security related constraints. This was mainly mentioned by key informant (K9) as follows.

"In my opinion the other obstacle both for domestic tourism and international tourism is the issue of safety and security problems in different corners of the country. Because safety and security concerns are discouraging both international and domestic tourists from exploring different parts of the country. Incidents of crimes and political unrests are creating negative perceptions on citizens."

Another challenge for domestic tourism development is the sector's unequal promotion in comparison to international tourism. Almost all stakeholders are still focused on attracting international tourists while ignoring domestic ones. The majority of travel intermediaries who took part in the key informant interview agreed that domestic tourism is treated differently than international tourism in Ethiopia. It is also claimed that the media has played an important role in ignoring domestic tourism development in Ethiopia because their primary focus is only on international tourism. This was described by key informants (K1, K2, K3, K5 and K8) as follows:

".... the attention of tour and travel companies is still focused on foreign tourists, and it is widely assumed that domestic tourists are unable to pay.

As a result, tour and travel companies devote their entire time to locating foreign tourists, who are viewed as potential sources of foreign currency" (K1)

"With the exception of a few starts, I don't believe the government or other tourism stakeholders have paid attention to this area" (K3)

...the primary goal of our organization is to present the true image of Ethiopia to the rest of the world. As a result, we have been concentrating our efforts primarily on foreign tourism. Because this is the specific aspect of tourism that can benefit both us and the country; however, we continue to focus on domestic tourism. However, domestic tourism in the country faces numerous challenges" (K5)

"Tour operators and travel agencies have failed to recognize the domestic tourism sector's potential. They primarily cater to tourists from other countries. Some interesting manifestations of this include the fact that their websites and promotional materials are all in English, and their prices are in US dollars" (K8)

"...even the mass media is not playing its expected role in developing domestic tourism in this country. They must carry out their responsibilities in order to help the industry grow. Essentially, tour and ravel-related documentary films that can help to elevate our traveling culture should be organized and distributed to audiences" (K2)

The lack of a nation-wide domestic tourism development strategy, as well as giving priority to international tourism at the expense of domestic tourism, have been identified as manifestations of gaps in government strategic direction and priority issues. This for instance expressed by K4 as:

"...the government's primary focus is on foreign tourists, so domestic tourism is unimportant to it. One clear indicator of this is the lack of a national domestic tourism strategy up to this point. Only foreigners are portrayed as ordinary tourists in this country" (K4)

As the key informants stated, developing appropriate incentive packages, regulatory, and legislative systems are critical issues in any type of development. As the key informants stated, the Ethiopian government has attempted to provide various types of incentives to tour and travel companies, including the importation of duty-free vehicles. However, as one key informant (K1) pointed out, this type of incentive is only applicable and restricted to international tourism businesses, and thus does not apply to domestic tourism.

"Even tour vehicles imported duty-

free by tour and travel companies are discouraged from being used for domestic tourists because they are intended for international tourists, and using those vehicles for locals is prohibited by the Ethiopian government" (K1)

Overall capacity-related obstacles, such as research gaps on domestic tourism, inconvenient institutional structure of domestic tourism, and a lack of skilled manpower, have been highlighted by key informants. Conducting timely studies is critical for designing policies/strategies, resolving existing challenges in this sector, and undertaking appropriate awareness creation campaigns. One key informant (K1), for example, described the situation as follows: "Domestic tourism is rarely on the research agenda, and few systematic studies on the sector are presented at various workshops and seminars." In line with this, the informants have emphasized the importance of research in the sector's development. According to them, the main reason for Ethiopia's domestic tourism's poor performance is a lack of research and development support. There is currently no tourism research center in Ethiopia that can conduct timely studies on this sector. Key informants (K2) described the problem in this regard as follows: "... even at the national level, we lack a research center focusing on tourism in general and domestic tourism in particular"

In this regard, the finding is highly consistent with previous studies in which limited tour and travel culture of citizens, non – existence of strategic documents, lack of consistent data on domestic tourism, poor attention given to domestic tourism and low marketing and promotion were identified as challenges of domestic tourism development (Bayih and Singh, 2020; Yechale, 2019; Eijgelaar, Peeters and Piket, 2008).

4. Conclusion and Implications/Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

The primary goal of this research was to investigate the challenges of domestic tourism development in Ethiopia. Domestic tourism in Ethiopia is not developed and mobilized in an organized manner, despite its long existence and occasional increament, and it is even mostly restricted to some travel purposes, particularly those related to religious reasons, business and sport events.

Domestic tourism, as previously stated, is a tried and tested sector for income generation, environmental protection, cross-cultural understanding, and national unity cohesion. Despite this reality, this sector is one of Ethiopia's most overlooked and unnoticed segments of tourism.

This study identified a number of factors impeding the development of this sector. The main impediments are Ethiopians' limited touring culture, research gaps in the sector,

poor awareness and promotion, priority issues, an inconvenient institutional structure of the sector, and the absence of a national domestic tourism development strategy. The remaining obstacles to the development of domestic tourism in Ethiopia are a shortage of skilled labor, a low level of economy and disposable income, uncoordinated proaches of stakeholders (coordination issues), issues with legislating and regulating the sector, a lack of price lists and promotional materials specifically designed for domestic tourists, and sector budget constraints, bureaucratic issues at various levels, ongoing damage to nature-based attraction sites, and so on.

This clearly implies the existence of different homeworks to be done at grass root level and the importance of establishing effective partnerships among stakeholders for fostering sustainable domestic tourism development by tackling existing challenges in Ethiopia. In this regard, this research provides new insights that can guide policy makers and other stakeholders in formulating effective strategies and policies to overcome the identified challenges.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations that may have a positive impact on the country's level of domestic tourism development. The researcher is convinced that domestic tourism development cannot be achieved by a single actor, but only through a holistic and coordinated approach, i.e. through coordinated and collaborative efforts of several key actors and stakeholders. Domestic tourism must be provided equal attention with international tourism, and emphasis must be placed on tourist destinations that attract domestic tourists. This necessitates the development of domestic tourism policies and strategies, as well as an institutional structure that is appropriate for the sector. Furthermore, a series of campaigns and initiatives to raise awareness in society, as well as incentives to encourage those who care about domestic tourism development, such as tour and travel companies, hotels, academics, and other stakeholders, to continue their efforts, are urgently needed. It appears useful to incorporate domestic tourism into school curricula, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, because improving citizens' tourism and travel cultures is not a one-time event; it must begin at the primary and secondary levels. Last but not least, the establishment of a national tourism research center will aid in the consistent identification of the sector's problems and the measures to be taken to address them.

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Annex I: Measurement Scales

Constructs	Reliability		Items	Factor
				Loading
Challenges of	$\alpha = 0.68$	-	Low influence of media	0.953
Domestic Tour-		-	Limited tour and travel culture of	0.458
ism Develop-	$\alpha = 0.63$		Ethiopians	
ment in Ethiopia				
(1= Strongly dis-		-	Absence of national domestic tourism	0.895
agree, 5=			development strategy	
Strongly agree)	$\alpha = 0.59$	-	Giving priority to international tour-	0.477
			ism in expense of domestic tourism	
		-	Research gaps on domestic tourism	0.602
		-	Inconvenient institutional structure	0.565
		-	Lack of skilled man power	0.558
		-	The perception of travel intermediar-	
			ies (domestic tourism is not profita-	
			ble)	
		-	Family circumstances/ family burdens	
		-	Limited product development and di-	
			versification	
		-	Investments are not always linked to	
			domestic tourists' demand	
		-	Uncoordinated approach of stake-	
			holders towards domestic tourism de-	
			velopment	
		-	Absence of a clear vision and direc-	
			tion towards domestic tourism devel-	
			opment	

- Increased cost of accommodation and transportation in Ethiopia
- Safety and security issues/ problems

Annex II: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin Measure	- Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		
	Approx. Chi-Square	479.044	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	91	
	Sig.	.000	